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SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

NEIL GAIMAN
MARC HEMPEL
D'ISRAELI

THE SANDMAN

THE KINDLY ONES

IT'S HAPPENING. VERY SLOWLY. BUT IT'S HAPPENING.

IT ALWAYS TAKES LONGER THAN YOU THINK, DOESN'T IT?

LOOK AT HER HAIR.

SHE'S VERY BEAUTIFUL, STHENO, ISN'T SHE?

DO YOU THINK SHE'S GOING TO BE OUR SISTER?

WE CAN PRAY.

THE GODS WE PRAYED TO WHEN WE WERE YOUNG USED UP THEIR TIME SO LONG AGO. THEY CANNOT ANSWER ANYMORE.

THEY NEVER LIKED US, DID THEY?

GODS DON'T "LIKE". THEY LOVE AND THEY HATE AND THEY IGNORE...

IF THEY LIKED US THEY WOULDN'T HAVE LET THAT YOUNG MAN DECAPITATE OUR DARLING...

IT WAS GOOD TO BE THREE. I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN...

TWOS DON'T WORK. TWOS HURT AND CRUMBLE. TWOS FALL INTO ONES, AND THEN INTO DUST AND NOTHINGS.

WE'RE STILL HERE.

THAT'S BECAUSE WE HAVEN'T GIVEN UP HOPE OF BEING A THREE AGAIN. I HOPE IT IS HER.

SHE'S VERY LOVELY.

GOOD MORNING SISTER LYTA. DID YOU SLEEP WELL?

I... I'M NOT YOUR SISTER.

YOU CAN BE IF YOU LIKE.

NO. I *DIDN'T* SLEEP WELL. I DREAMED OF MY HUSBAND, AND I DREAMED OF MY SON.

DID YOU DREAM OF YOUR FATHER?

I NEVER *KNEW* MY FATHER.

AH. PROBABLY A GOD. THEY NEVER SEEMED TO CARE WHERE THEY SPURT THEIR SEED. NOT KEEN ON THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES AS FATHERS, GODS.

I FEEL VERY STRANGE.

HERE. HAVE SOME WATER.

MY *HAIR*. THERE ARE SNAKES IN MY HAIR.

ONLY A FEW NOW. BUT THERE WILL BE MORE, THE LONGER YOU STAY HERE.

SOON YOU'LL BE JUST LIKE MEDUSA.

SNAKES.

SHE WAS YOUR SISTER?

SHE WAS SPECIAL. SHE'S **STILL** IN OUR HEARTS.

I... I DON'T *WANT* TO BE LIKE YOU TWO.

AH. BUT YOU COULD BE SO MUCH WORSE.

I DON'T *NEED* GORGONS. I NEED VENGEANCE..

YOU MUST HAVE NEEDED US A LITTLE. OR YOU WOULDN'T HAVE COME HERE.

WE'RE NOT OFFENDED, DEAR. NOT REALLY. WE REALLY LIKE HAVING THE COMPANY. BUT YOU MIGHT WANT TO RECONSIDER.

IF YOU GO LOOKING FOR THE LADIES... WELL, I DON'T KNOW THAT THAT'S SUCH A GOOD IDEA. YOU MIGHT FIND THEM.

ARE YOU SURE YOU WON'T STAY?

HE KILLED MY HUSBAND. HE KILLED MY SON.

I WILL NOT STAY.

AND I WILL HAVE REVENGE.

CAN I HAVE MORE WATER, PLEASE?

MY HAIR DRANK MOST OF IT.

ROSE WALKER'S JOURNAL:

I've been making a list of the things they don't teach you at school.

They don't teach you how to love somebody. They don't teach you how to be famous. They don't teach you how to be rich, or how to be poor.

NIGHT DEATH SQUAD

NOW ON VIDEO!

They don't teach you how to walk away from someone you don't love any longer. They don't teach you how to know what's going on in someone else's mind.

They don't teach you what to say to someone who's dying.

They don't teach you anything worth knowing.

DUNA OSPICE

QUIET PLEASE

Sometimes I feel. Shit. I don't know. Hollow.

Mostly when I don't feel what I ought to feel, inside.

I've got a friend who's dying from AIDS. How does that make me feel?

Empty. That's all. Just empty.

THE KINDLY ONES 5

WRITTEN BY NEIL GAIMAN

DRAWN BY MARC HEMPEL

INKED BY D'ISRAELI & HEMPEL PP. 17,18,21-24

LETTERED BY TODD KLEIN
COLORED BY DANIEL VOZZO
SEPARATED BY ANDROID IMAGES
PULLED TOGETHER BY KAREN BERGER ASSOCIATED BY SHELLY ROEBERG

SANDMAN CHARACTERS CREATED BY GAIMAN, KIETN & DRINGENBERG

HI, ZELDA. IT'S ME. IT'S ROSE.

ROSE?

THAT'S RIGHT.

HOW YOU DOING TODAY?

A BB-- BIT WEAK. A BIT CRAZY FOR A WHILE. I CAN'T SWALLOW PROPERLY. THREW UP ALL MY PILLS AGAIN...

AND I'M SO HHH--

HHORNY I COULD SC--

REAM...

WELL, HANG IN THERE.

DD-- DID I EVER TELL YOU THE STORY ABOUT THE FOOTSTEPS IN THE SAND AND THERE ARE TWO SETS OF FOOTSTEPS TOGETHER, BECAUSE SOME OF THEM ARE GGGGG--

GOD'S EXCEPT THERE AREN'T ALWAYS TWO OF THEM. AND THE WOMAN SAYS TO GOD, WHERE WERE YOU WHEN I WAS IN TROUBLE? AND HE SAYS, THAT WAS ME CARRYING YOU...

YOU TOLD ME. IT'S A VERY *PRETTY* STORY.

WHATEVER, ROSIE. THESE DAYS I JUST FEEL LIKE GOD'S DDDDDD--

DUMPED ME DOWN ON THE SAND.

DO YOU BBBBB--

BELIEVE IN GOD?

I BELIEVE IN *LOTS* OF THINGS.

CHANTAL DIDN'T BBB--

BELIEVE IN GOD. SHE LOVED SPIDERS AND SKULLS AND GRAVEYARDS FOR THEMSELVES. I LOVED THEM BECAUSE THEY SHOWED TTTTT--TT--

TTTRANSIENCE.

YOU'RE SMILING.

WHUWHAT ARE YOU SMILING AT?

I DON'T KNOW. BECAUSE YOU NEVER USED TO *SPEAK*, I SUPPOSE. CHANTAL DID ALL THE SPEAKING FOR BOTH OF YOU.

BBBB--

BECAUSE I SSSSSSS--

SSTTTTT--

AND I'M SITTIN' THERE NOT SAYING "STAMMER," BECAUSE THE LAST TIME I FINISHED ONE OF HER SENTENCES SHE STARTED TO CRY AND WOULDN'T TALK AGAIN FOR AN HOUR.

S-*STUTTERED*.

I THOUGHT SKULLS WERE A WAY OF TTT--

TOUCHING FOREVER.

CAN YOU SEE MY SKULL YET?

YOU'RE GETTING PRETTY SKINNY, ZELDA. BUT NOT YET.

I WISH I WAS STILL BBB-

BEAUTIFUL, ROSE. AND I'M SO HORNY. THEY DON'T TELL YOU THAT IN THE...

LITERATURE. IT'S LIKE MY BODY KNOWS IT'S DYING, AND IT'S SSSS--

--SSAYING "SEX SEX SEX" ALL THE TIME TO ME. LIKE I'VE ONLY GOT A FEW MORE WEEKS, AND IT WHUWANTS TO MAKE A BBBB--

BBABY, OR IT WHUWANTS TO GET CLOSE TO SOMEONE.

WE'VE BEEN OVER THIS A *DOZEN* TIMES, ZELDA. I'M HAPPY TO COME DOWN AND SEE YOU EVERY DAY. I'M HAPPY TO PICK UP YOUR BILLS.

THAT'S WHERE IT STOPS.

WHAT?

NOTHING.

I'LL BE DEAD SOON.

I KNOW.

IT'S MY BBB--

BIRTHDAY NEXT WEEK.

YOU *TOLD* ME.

I'LL BE THIRTY.

ROSIE?

YES.

WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?

WHAT?

VVVV--

VISITING ME EVERY DAY. PPPPPP--

PAYING ALL MY MEDICAL BILLS. YOU HARDLY EVEN KNEW ME. *WHY?*

BECAUSE I *CAN*, I SUPPOSE.

IT'S A VIGIL. THAT'S WHAT IT IS. IT'S A VIGIL.

I DON'T EVEN KNOW HOW SHE GOT *AIDS*. IT DOESN'T MATTER REALLY, DOES IT?

HER IMMUNE SYSTEM DOESN'T WORK ANYMORE. SIMPLE AS THAT.

MAM'S II

ZELDA SAYS THERE'S A GUY DOWN THE HALL HAS A DISEASE THEY'VE ONLY EVER SEEN BEFORE IN SHEEP. THAT'S ALMOST FUNNY, ISN'T IT?

IT MUST BE A REAL BETRAYAL, WHEN YOUR BODY TURNS AGAINST YOU.

I WONDER IF SHE LIKES FLOWERS.

ALL THE BITS OF YOU THAT CAN GO WRONG...

I DON'T LIKE FLOWERS, NOT REALLY. I LIKE GROWING THEM, BUT THAT'S ONLY BECAUSE I LIKE SEEING THEM BLOSSOM, AND SEEING THEM DIE.

--WHY ROSE WALKER, HOW VERY EXISTENTIAL OF YOU.

I SHOULD *ASK* HER IF SHE LIKES THEM, INSTEAD OF JUST BRINGING THEM...

BUT OH, HOW I *DO* LOVE TO PLAY GOD.

YOU KNOW, ROSE, YOU DON'T LOOK A DAY OLDER THAN YOU DID IN FLORIDA.

THANKS.

SLEEP WELL?

DID I FALL ASLEEP?

MM.

I WAS TTTT--

TOLD TO GIVE YOU A MESSAGE.

OH *YEAH*? WHO'S THE MESSAGE FROM?

YOUR GGGGGG--

GRANDMOTHER. SHE SAID SHE HAD A MESSAGE FOR YOU. SHE SAID IT WAS IMPORTANT.

MY GRANDMOTHER'S *DEAD*, ZELDA.

I KNOW. SHE *SAID* THAT. SHE *SAID* SHE WAS *DEAD*.

YOU HAVE TO GO BACK WHERE SHE LIVED.

WHERE SHE USED TO SLEEP.

SHE SAID YOU WOULD KNOW WHERE SHE MEANT.

HEY-- ZELDA--THIS IS JUST *TOO* WEIRD--

SHE SAID IF YOU GO TO HER SHE'LL GIVE YOU BACK YOUR HEART.

The Dreaming.

WHAT AM I CALLED?

You are the Corinthian.

YES...

I AM. GOOD. AN IDENTITY...

YES. I AM ME.

I AM NOT THE FIRST CORINTHIAN, AM I?

You are the second.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE FIRST?

He was a disappointment. I uncreated him.

I WOULD NOT WISH TO BE A DISAPPOINTMENT.

No.

I KNOW YOU. I KNOW THIS PLACE. THIS IS THE --THE DREAMING. YES?

Yes.

AND YOU ARE THE LORD OF THIS REALM.

Yes.

AND *THIS* IS THE RAVEN... JESSAMY?

This is the Raven Matthew. The Raven Jessamy has not been with us for some time.

MATTHEW. YOU HAVE BEAUTIFUL EYES, MATTHEW.

I WAS... WALKING THE WAKING WORLD, TEACHING THEM THINGS.

Yes.

I REMEMBER. IN TINY FRAGMENTS, I REMEMBER.

WHY DO I REMEMBER?

Because there is a fragment of the first Corinthian in your essence. I saved a little of him.

WHAT...

WHAT SHALL I DO? WHAT SHALL I MAKE? WHAT SHALL I BE?

Eventually, many things.

For now...

You will run an errand for me. There is a task to be done.

Matthew will go with you.

I'LL WHAT?

You will accompany him, Matthew.

BUT-BOSS- I DON'T LIKE HIM.

I did not ask you to like him. I told you to accompany him.

WHY DON'T YOU LIKE ME?

YOU KILL PEOPLE. YOU EAT THEIR EYEBALLS.

YES... YES, I SUPPOSE I DO. OR I WILL. BUT THAT IS MY NATURE, ISN'T IT? THAT IS WHAT I AM.

DO YOU NOT EAT EYEBALLS ALSO, MASTER RAVEN? DO YOU NOT ALSO FEAST ON CARRION?

SOME-TIMES.

WHY DON'T YOU STOP?

I EAT DEAD THINGS. I PECK OUT EYES. I'M A RAVEN. IT'S MY NATURE.

AND I AM THE CORINTHIAN.

WITH ME BY YOUR SIDE YOU WILL BE SAFE FROM ALL OTHER HARM, BIRD.

IS THAT MEANT TO BE RE-ASSURING?

Enough.

Your errand is this: find a certain child; and bring him here.

Faerie

"WELCOME HOME, DEAR, DEAR NUALA. WELCOME BACK."

"THANK YOU, MY LADY."

I TRUST YOU DID NOT THINK YOUR EXILE WOULD BE PERMANENT, NUALA, MY SWEET. IT WAS FITTING FOR ITS TIME, BUT I ASSURE YOU THAT *NO ONE* HERE IS MORE PLEASED TO SEE YOU BACK THAN I.

THANK YOU, YOUR MAJESTY.

HMM. VERY *PRETTY.* THAT'S *NEW,* ISN'T IT?

YES...MY LADY.

SO. HOW WAS HE?

WHO, MY LADY?

THE LORD SHAPER, NUALA. IN WHOM ELSE'S REALM MIGHT YOU HAVE SPENT THE LAST THREE YEARS?

OH. HIM. HE WAS PERFECTLY TOLERABLE.

DID HE EVER SPEAK OF ME?

OF YOU, MY LADY?

YES. OF ME.

HE *MIGHT* HAVE DONE, MY LADY. I REALLY COULD NOT SAY.

NO?

I WAS *RARELY* PRIVY TO THE LORD SHAPER'S CONVERSATION, MY LADY. HE KEEPS HIS OWN COUNSEL.

DID HE HAPPEN TO GIVE YOU ANY *MESSAGES* FOR ME?

NOT ONE, MY LADY.

IS THAT YOUR *OLD* FACE, DEAR? IT SEEMS, IF YOU'LL PARDON MY SAYING SO, A LITTLE LESS *GLAMOROUS* THAN I REMEMBER.

AND YOU MIGHT LOOK BETTER WITH A FEW MORE *CURVES*.

THIS GLAMOUR MAY HAVE CHANGED A *LITTLE*, MY LADY. BUT I SEEM AS I FEEL *COMFORTABLE* SEEMING.

THAT REALLY IS A *LOVELY* LITTLE BAUBLE...

IS IT?

IF I WERE TO *ASK* YOU FOR IT, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?

I WOULD BE FORCED TO ADMIT THAT IT WAS A *GIFT*, MILADY, AND NOT IN MY POWER TO GIVE. *IF*, OF COURSE, YOU WERE TO ASK.

THIS *BORES* ME. FAREWELL.

ONE *HAD* HOPED THAT HER TIME IN THE DREAMING MIGHT HAVE TAUGHT HER BETTER *MANNERS*.

MAJESTY.

I dreamed of kittens who were born to neutered puss, then dreamed about a body buried in the corn--

--be sure your sins will find you out.

AWAY! FOOLISH LITTLE BOGGART.

But I've three more verses, and an *envoi* and I must tell them to only you, lady.

ENOUGH, AND AWAY, I SAY.

SO, I COULD CALL YOU, I COULD ALWAYS CALL. AND IF I *DID* GIVE IN AND CALL, WHAT THEN?

YOU'D BOLT TOWARD THAT BITCH AND KISS HER HAND, THEN BOW TOO DEEP, AND WALK, OR MINUET...

HOW FITTING THAT LORD AUBERON IS HORN'D.

BUT I CAN *CALL* YOU. I CAN ALWAYS CALL.

YOU KNOW, THERE'S A THREE-HEADED SNAKE OUT IN THE GARDEN. I DON'T THINK IT TRUSTS YOU TWO. IT WAS RUDE ABOUT YOU.

WELL, THEN THE NEXT TIME WE SEE IT WE'LL GLARE AT IT.

CUT IT DEAD.

AHH...

WHERE DID YOU GO?

WE WERE HERE. WE'RE ALWAYS HERE.

WE'LL MISS YOU.

WE GIVE YOU GIFTS, AS YOU LEAVE. WE GIVE YOU CLAWS OF BRASS. WE GIVE YOU THE NIMBIC GLIMMERING.

IF YOU HAD STAYED WITH US, WE COULD HAVE GIVEN YOU LIFE UNTIL DEATH.

DON'T I GET THAT ANYWAY?

THAT'S WHAT WE LIKED ABOUT YOU.

YOU WERE SO FUNNY.

"TO BE TOTALLY HONEST, NO, I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU.

"COULD YOU START AGAIN AT THE BEGINNING?"

SURE. I'VE GOT A FRIEND NAMED LYTA HALL. RIGHT? SHE'S GOT A KID NAMED DANIEL--HE'S TWO, THREE YEARS OLD. OKAY?

THREE NIGHTS AGO, LYTA WENT OUT FOR THE EVENING. WHEN SHE CAME BACK, HER SON WAS GONE, RIGHT?

WE CALLED THE POLICE, AND EVENTUALLY YOUR DETECTIVES FELLOWES AND PINKERTON SHOWED UP AND TOOK OUR STATEMENT. YOU WITH ME SO FAR?

UH-HUH.

THEY SAID THEY'D BE TALKING TO ROSE DOWNSTAIRS, TOO, BUT THEY NEVER DID, YEAH? I MEAN, SHE TOLD ME THAT.

NOW, LYTA'S NOT REALLY VERY WELL-BALANCED. SHE USED TO DRESS UP IN COSTUMES, Y'KNOW? THEN SHE GOT MARRIED, AND PREGNANT, AND SHE VANISHED FOR A FEW YEARS.

WHEN SHE GOT BACK SHE WAS STILL PREGNANT, AND IT WAS LIKE, HER MIND WASN'T QUITE THE SAME.

SHE HASN'T REALLY BEEN OUT OF THE HOUSE IN YEARS. SINCE DANIEL WAS BORN. AND NOW SHE'S VANISHED AND I'M REALLY WORRIED.

THESE DETECTIVES. WHAT DID THEY LOOK LIKE?

PINKERTON'S A TALL, SKINNY WHITE GUY WITH RED HAIR, FELLOWES IS A REALLY SHORT WHITE GUY WITH DARK HAIR.

MM. DOESN'T RING ANY BELLS.

WELL, MAYBE THEY WERE FROM ANOTHER PRECINCT, OR SOMETHING. AND WHAT ABOUT FINDING LYTA? WHAT ABOUT DANIEL?

WE'LL MAKE OUR OWN ENQUIRIES.

THANKS FOR STOPPING BY.

LOOK--THEY GAVE ME *THIS*.

YEAH?

I'M *SURE* IT HAD A NAME AND A PHONE NUMBER ON IT WHEN THEY *GAVE* IT TO ME. MAYBE IT WAS WRITTEN IN DISAPPEARING INK. AND YOU COULD CHECK IT FOR *FINGERPRINTS*.

I'M SOUNDING LIKE A CRAZY PERSON NOW, AREN'T I?

THANKS AGAIN. WE'LL GET *BACK* TO YOU.

HEY! I *KNOW* YOU! *MISSY!* DON'T I *KNOW* YOU?

JUST LEAVE ME THE HELL ALONE.

HEY, YOU LEAVE THE PEOPLE BE, NOW.

HEY! MISSY! YOUR *FRIEND?* THE *MEAN* ONE? I *SEEN* HER. SHE'S GOT SNAKES IN HER HAIR.

AND SHE'S NOT ALONE IN HER HEAD ANYMORE.

HEY!

AREN'T YOU LISTENING? I SAID TO KEEP IT *DOWN*.

LYTA...? HELLO...? YOU BACK YET, HON?

WHAT THE F...

AH.

AAAAH!

OWWW...

YOU OKAY? I HEARD THE NOISE UP HERE. I THOUGHT MAYBE LYTA WAS BACK.

WHAT'S THAT SMELL?

ROAST ME.

I WAS HOLDING THIS PHOTOGRAPH AND...

OWWWWW...

DO PHOTOGRAPHS SPONTANEOUSLY COMBUST?

I DON'T KNOW. I THOUGHT THAT WAS ONLY PEOPLE.

LOOK, LYTA HAS A PRETTY EXTENSIVE FIRST-AID KIT IN THE BATHROOM. CAN YOU BRING ME SOME BURN OINTMENT, AND SOME GAUZE BANDAGES?

SURE. IN THE BATHROOM. RIGHT.

YOU WEREN'T *KIDDING* ABOUT THE FIRST-AID KIT. IT'S LIKE A MINI-HOSPITAL IN HERE.

YEAH, WELL. LYTA WAS ALWAYS SCARED THAT DANIEL WOULD HURT HIMSELF AND SHE WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO *DO* ANYTHING ABOUT IT.

THAT'S A REALLY NASTY *BURN*. YOU REALLY OUGHT TO SEE A DOCTOR.

I *WILL*.

SAY... *ROSE*? DO YOU BELIEVE IN MAGIC?

NOT REALLY, *NO*. BUT THAT'S *NOT* WHAT YOU'RE ASKING ME.

IT'S *NOT*?

NOPE.

WHAT YOU'RE ASKING ME IS, DO I BELIEVE IN *WEIRD SHIT*? AND THE ANSWER IS *YES*. OF *COURSE* I DO. I'D HAVE TO BE *CRAZY* NOT TO. I'VE HAD A WEIRD SHIT *LIFE*.

WEIRD SHIT. THAT'S A GOOD WAY OF PUTTING IT.

LOOK, I WAS *WONDERING*, IF YOU'RE NOT BUSY TOMORROW, COULD WE GET TOGETHER? I WANT TO TALK SOME MORE ABOUT THIS STUFF.

NOT TOMORROW. MAYBE *NEXT* WEEK. I'M GOING TO ENGLAND FOR A FEW DAYS. I JUST BOUGHT MY TICKET. I LEAVE TONIGHT.

FAMILY PROBLEM?

IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING. I GOT THIS MESSAGE THAT MY GRANDMOTHER NEEDS TO TELL ME SOMETHING.

DOESN'T SHE BELIEVE IN THE *TELEPHONE*?

NOT ANYMORE; SHE'S BEEN *DEAD* FOR FOUR YEARS.

HUH?

LIKE I SAID: *WEIRD SHIT*. YOU THINK YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE?

HELLO...

HELLO. WHO ARE YOU?

TAKE A MOMENT TO REFLECT.

AND HOW DID YOU GET HERE FROM THERE, MRS. HALL ?

I DON'T KNOW.

I REALLY DON'T.

I WAS SUCH A TOGETHER PERSON. AND I DIDN'T MAKE DECISIONS.

I MEAN, I NEVER DID ANY-THING IN MY WHOLE LIFE THAT WASN'T SOMEONE ELSE'S IDEA.

LIKE A GIRL IN A MIRROR.

LIKE I WAS WATCHING, SITTING, BRUSHING MY HAIR, WHILE MY LIFE WENT BY ON THE GLASS. WHEN MY MOTHER DESERTED ME. WHEN HECTOR DIED. WHEN HECTOR DIED AGAIN.

WHEN DANIEL WAS KILLED, IT WAS LIKE THE MIRROR WAS BROKEN.

THERE WERE ONLY TWO THINGS I COULD HAVE DONE. AND ONE OF THEM WOULD HAVE BEEN JUST TO LIE DOWN AND NEVER GET UP AGAIN.

IT'S LIKE HOW MANY TIMES CAN LIFE HIT YOU?

WHEN DO THE BLOWS START TO HURT?

WHEN DO YOU JUST ...STOP?

ACTUALLY, THAT'S A VERY GOOD POINT. YOU'RE NOT REALLY STOP-PING, OF COURSE, DEAR. RIGHT NOW, YOU'RE JUST SORTING EVERY-THING OUT. THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS, AS IT WERE.

PRIOR TO DOING SOMETHING YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY DO.

NOT A HOPE, MY DEARIE. DOOMED TO FAIL.

ON YOUR OWN...

EXCUSE ME. BUT WHICH ONE OF US AM I?

DOES IT MATTER?

NO. IT DOESN'T MATTER.

NICE EVENING.

YOU KNOW, WHERE I COME FROM, WE GET SIX MONTHS OF SNOW AND ICE, SIX MONTHS OF MUD AND MOSQUITOS. IN MIDWINTER THE SUN RISES AT NOON, SETS AN HOUR OR SO LATER. THERE'S NEVER ANY CERTAINTY THAT THE SUN WILL *EVER* COME BACK.

SOMEONE COULD JUST STICK A SHARPENED SPRIG OF MISTLETOE THROUGH ITS HEART AND, WELL, *GAME OVER*. WINTER DARKNESS FOREVER.

WHO *ARE* YOU? YOU AREN'T A COP.

WHERE'S *LYTA*?

WHAT THE HELL IS GOING *ON*?

WELL, IF YOU GET IN THE CAR, I'LL TELL YOU.

STRAP YOURSELF IN. THEN TOSS THE KEYS INTO THE BACK. YOU CAN GO FIND THEM WHEN WE'RE DONE TALKING.

YOU *GOT* THAT?

UH-HUH.

YOU'RE *NOT* A COP. WHO THE FUCK *ARE* YOU?

MERELY ONE WHO REGRETS THE ABANDONMENT OF THEOLOGY, IN THESE STRANGE WARM TIMES.

MISTER PINKERTON. UH, LUKE... WHY DON'T YOU PUT THE *GUN* AWAY?

BECAUSE I'M NOT *HOLDING* A GUN.

UH. RIGHT. *FINE.* WHATEVER YOU SAY.

AREN'T I *SLY?* IT WAS A *CIGARETTE* ALL THE TIME.

THERE'S A *THEORY* THAT FOR A HUMAN TO BE KILLED BY A GOD IS THE BEST THING THAT COULD POSSIBLY HAPPEN TO THE HUMAN UNDER DISCUSSION.

IT ELIMINATES ALL QUESTIONS OF BELIEF, WHILE MANIFESTLY PLACING A HUMAN LIFE AT THE SERVICE OF A HIGHER POWER. WHERE DO *YOU* STAND ON THIS THEORY?

I--I DON'T BELIEVE IN GOD.

YOU DON'T *HAVE* TO BELIEVE IN GOD. BUT WHAT ABOUT *GODS?* ***EH?*** THE *PLURALITY* OF POWERS AND DOMINIONS. THE LORDS AND LADIES OF FIELD AND THORN, OF ASPHALT AND SEWER, GODS OF TELEPHONE AND WHORE, GODS OF HOSPITAL AND CAR-CRASH?

THIS IS *CRAZY.*

THERE IS A MADNESS NEEDED TO TOUCH THE GODS, ***YES,*** THIS IS ***TRUE.*** FEW MORTALS POSSESS IT, THE WILLINGNESS TO STEP AWAY FROM THE PROTECTION OF SANITY. TO WALK INTO THE WILD WOOD OF MADNESS...

MISTER PINKERTON. WHATEVER YOUR NAME IS. *PLEASE.* STOP THIS.

HOW ABOUT A KISS? *NO?* I COULD TAKE IT, IF I WANTED.

YOU KNOW WHAT *STICKS* PEOPLE TO SOMETHING? THE DESIRE TO KNOW HOW IT'S ALL GOING TO END. IT'S LIKE GLUE.

AND DO YOU KNOW *YOUR* TRAGEDY, CARLA?

UH-UH.

IT'S THAT, FOR *ALL* YOUR GOODWILL, FOR ALL YOUR WILLINGNESS TO HELP, YOU NEVER KNEW WHAT *ANY* OF THIS WAS ALL ABOUT. WHAT WAS GOING ON.

YOU DON'T KNOW HOW IT ENDS.

AND YOU'LL *NEVER* GET TO FIND OUT.

STAY THERE. YOU CAN'T MOVE, CAN YOU?

NO. I CAN'T.

WHO *ARE* YOU?

I AM THE MOTHER TO ODIN'S STALLION, SLEIPNIR. I AM THE FATHER OF FENRIR SUN-EATER, AND OF HEL HALF-ROTTED AND OF JORMUNGUND THE WORLD-SERPENT.

I AM LOKI SCAR-LIP, LOKI SKYWALKER, LOKI GIANT'S CHILD, LOKI LIE-SMITH.

I AM *LOKI*, WHO IS FIRE AND WIT AND HATE.

I AM LOKI.

AND I WILL BE UNDER AN OBLIGATION TO *NO ONE*.

FROM THE NEW YORK TIMES
#1 BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

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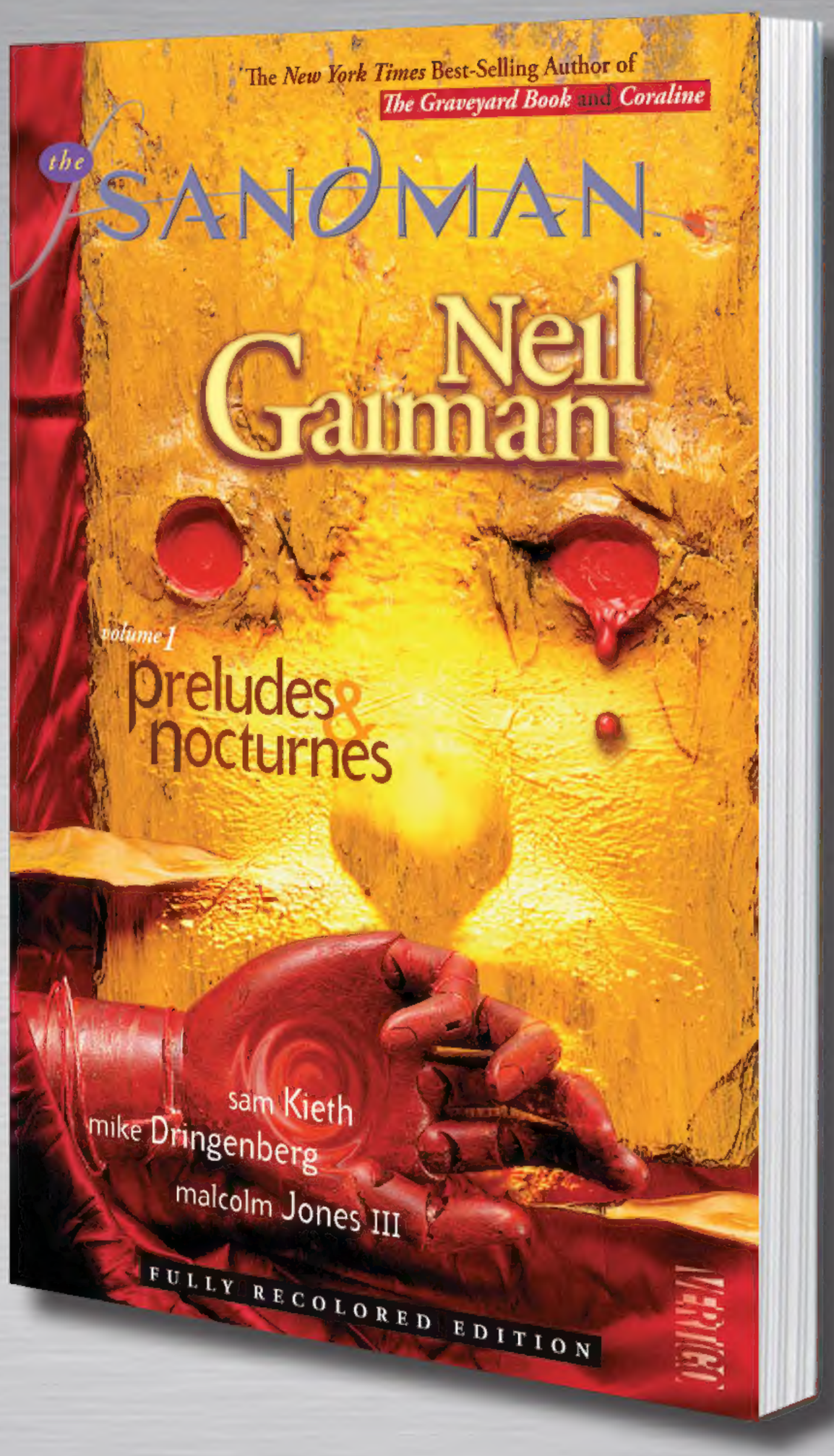
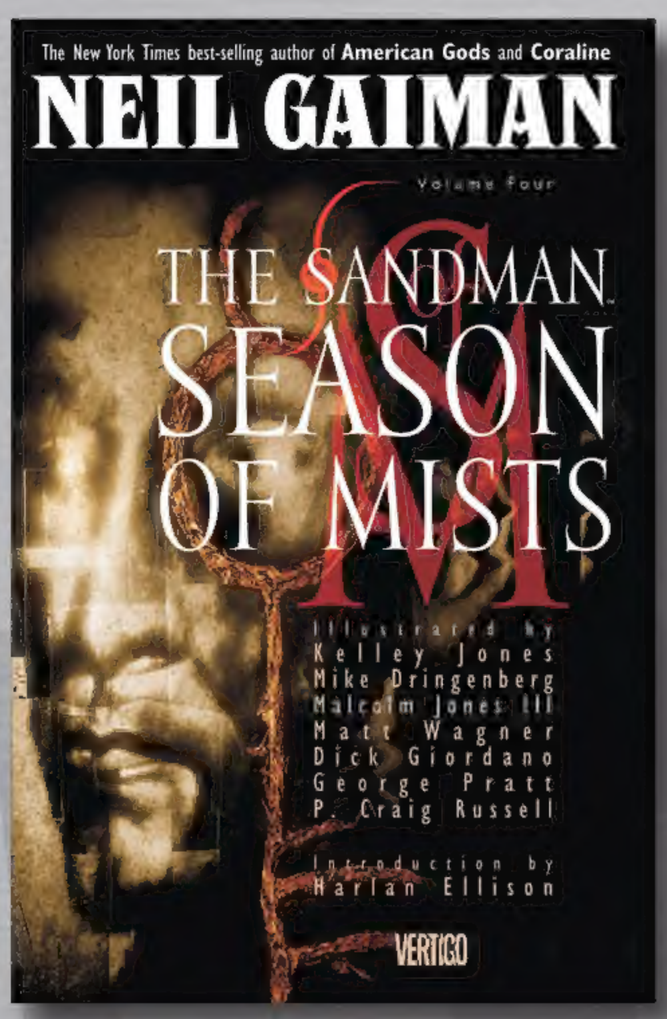
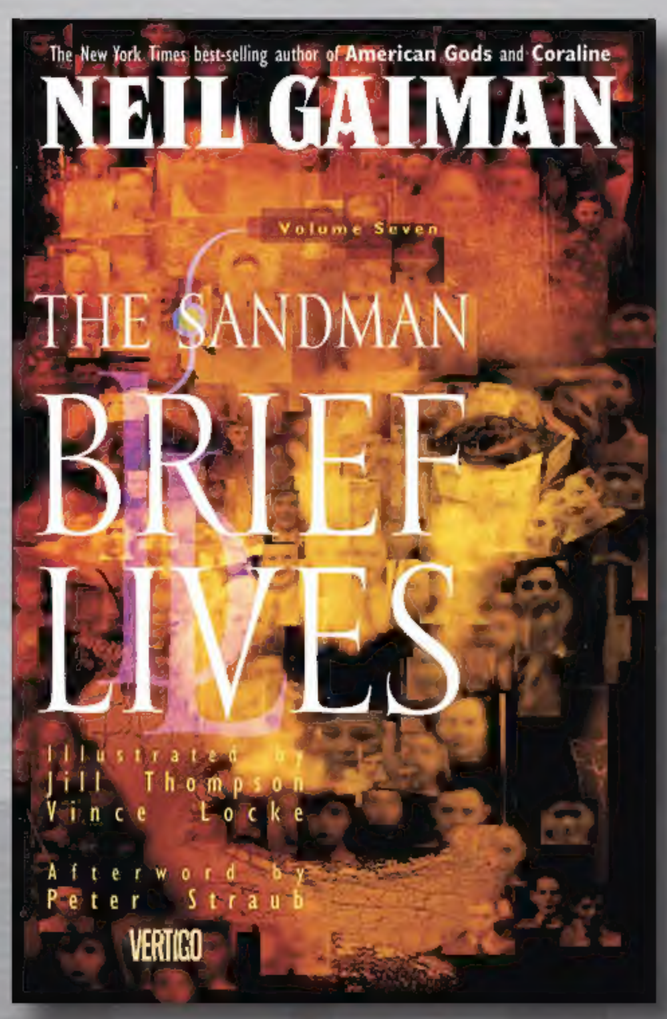


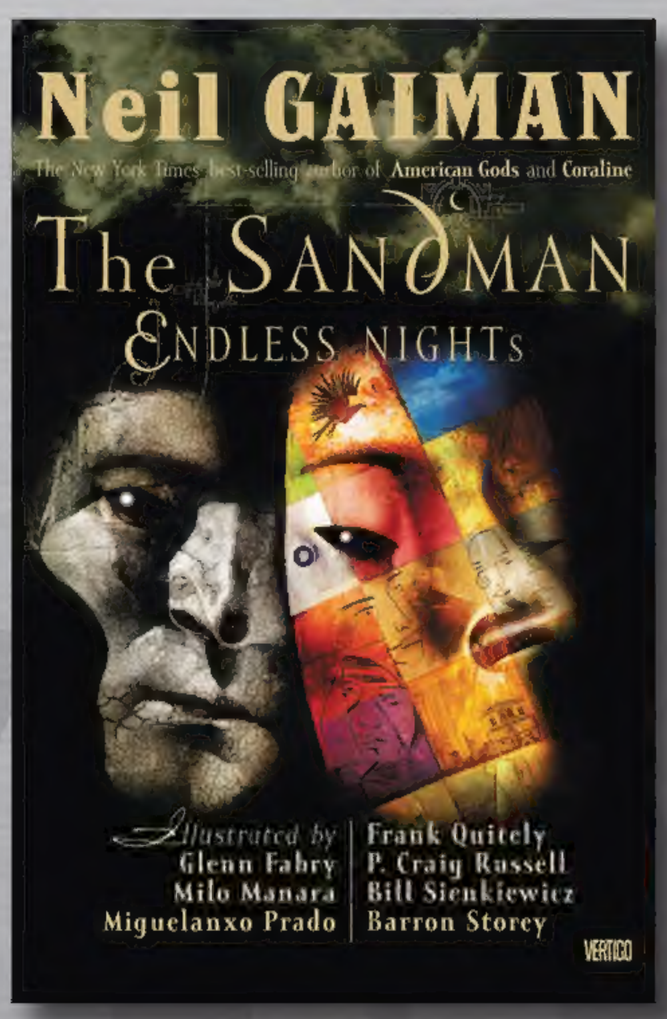
THE SANDMAN VOL. 4:
SEASON OF MISTS



THE SANDMAN VOL. 7:
BRIEF LIVES



THE SANDMAN:
ENDLESS NIGHTS



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